

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

COB/NEA

TO : Department of State (CA/OCS/NEA) DATE: July 24, 1980

FROM : Amembassy TEL AVIV

SUBJECT: Black Hebrew Communities in Israel

As a result of the GOI's recent recommendation to legalize the status of Black Hebrew Community members in Israel, Embassy has written a letter to the MFA expressing its concern over the documentation of children born to the Community members over the past few years. Attached is a copy of that letter.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY JC DATE 8/10/81

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

SECRET



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Tel Aviv, Israel

July 18, 1980

Mr Gideon Saguy
Director Consular Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Jerusalem

Dear Mr Saguy:

I am writing to bring to your attention a matter of mutual concern to our respective Governments with the regard to the documentation of children born during the past several years to members of the Black Hebrew Community in Dimona, Arad and Mitzpe Rimon.

As you know, the Glass Commission recently recommended regularizing the status of the members of the Black Hebrew Community, offering them prospects of eventual Israeli citizenship. Since the first arrival of Black Hebrews to Israel in 1969, a great number of children (estimates at more than 200) have been born to Black Hebrew members - births witnessed only by mid-wives and not registered with Israeli Authorities. Within the past few weeks, a number of Black Hebrew women desiring to leave the sect have requested Embassy assistance in their repatriation. These women have been accompanied by children who may or may not be their own and who, if US citizens, would be entitled to assistance in repatriation to the US. There are 66 cases of members of the Black Hebrew Community who renounced US citizenship during the period late 1973 early 1974. We are also aware that a number of non-US citizens from West African and Caribbean countries are members of the Black Hebrew Community.

The fact that the children in the Community have not been registered at birth with Israeli Authorities, complicates the matter of determination of their claims to US citizenship.

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

As the Government of Israel is making an effort to legalize the status of members of the Black Hebrew Communities, we foresee that families of Black Hebrews, eligible to legally depart and return to Israel, will be requesting documentation for visits to the United States. The problem of documenting children born in Israel without official registration by Israeli authorities will undoubtedly complicate such travel.

We are therefore as concerned as you are that as the Israeli Immigration authorities attempt to document members of the Community, proper attention be given to determine the true parentage of each child. I am expressing this concern because, from reports we have received, it is possible that the children of parents who have renounced US citizenship or never were citizens will be passed as children of eligible mothers. To date the only verification possible has been the signed affidavits by alleged mid-wives who act as witnesses to the births. It is our understanding, however, that a log of all births has been maintained by the Black Hebrew Community. This log would prove particularly helpful in determining parentage of Black Hebrew children. James Kerr, the former Chief of the Consular Section, discussed with [REDACTED] the need for properly documenting the children of the Community and was assured by [REDACTED] that he will take steps to do so. B-6
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I hope that the above information will be of assistance to you, and I am confident that we can count on your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Karl Sprick
American Consul

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